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PREPARATIONS FOR THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE: DRAFT PLATFORM FOR ACTION

Draft Platform for Action

Addendum

Chapter IV

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

A. The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women

39. More than 1 billion people in the world today live under unacceptable conditions of poverty, mostly in the developing countries, the great majority of whom are women. The uncertain global economic climate has been accompanied by economic restructuring, persistent external debt problems and structural adjustment programmes. All types of conflict, displacement of people and environmental degradation have also further undermined the capacity of Governments to meet the basic needs of their populations. The global transformations of the world economy are profoundly changing the parameters of social development in all countries. One significant trend has been the increased poverty of women, the extent of which varies from region to region. The gender disparities in economic power-sharing are also an important contributing factor to the poverty of women. [Full text on unemployment and underemployment to come.] Migration and consequent changes in family structures have placed additional burdens on women, especially those who provide for several dependants. Macroeconomic policies need rethinking and reformulation to address these trends. These policies focus almost exclusively on the formal sector. They also tend to impede the initiatives of women and fail to consider the differential impact on women and men. The application of gender analysis to a wide range of policies and programmes is therefore critical to poverty

reduction strategies. In order to eradicate poverty and achieve sustainable development, women and men must participate fully and equally in the formulation of macroeconomic and social policies and strategies for the eradication of poverty. The eradication of poverty cannot be accomplished through anti-poverty programmes alone but will require democratic participation and changes in economic structures in order to ensure access for all women to resources, opportunities and public services. Poverty is a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains. Poverty has various manifestations, including lack of income and productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood; hunger and malnutrition; ill health; limited or lack of access to education and other basic services; increasing morbidity and mortality from illness; homelessness and inadequate housing; unsafe environments; and social discrimination and exclusion. It is also characterized by lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and cultural life. It occurs in all countries - as mass poverty in many developing countries and as pockets of poverty amidst wealth in developed countries. Poverty may be caused by an economic recession that results in a loss of livelihood or by disaster or conflict. There is also the poverty of low-wage workers and the utter destitution of people who fall outside family support systems, social institutions and safety nets.

40. In the past decade the number of women living in poverty has increased disproportionately to the number of men, particularly in the developing countries. Feminization of poverty has also recently become a significant problem in the countries with economies in transition as a short-term consequence of the process of political, economic and social transformation. In addition to economic factors, the rigidity of socially ascribed gender roles and women's limited access to power, education, training and productive resources [as well as emerging cultural and social factors that lead to instability and the deterioration of families] are also responsible. The failure to adequately mainstream a gender perspective in all economic analysis and planning and to address the structural causes of poverty is also a contributing factor.

41. Women contribute to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace. The empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.

42. While poverty affects households as a whole, because of the gender division of labour and responsibilities for household welfare, women bear a disproportionate burden, attempting to manage household consumption and production under conditions of increasing scarcity. Poverty is particularly acute for women living in rural households.

43. Women's poverty is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources, including credit, land ownership and inheritance, and education and support services, and minimal participation in the decision-making process. Poverty can also force women into situations in which they are vulnerable to sexual exploitation.

43 bis. In too many countries, social welfare systems do not take sufficient account of the specific conditions of women living in poverty, and there is a

tendency to scale back the services provided by such systems. The risk of falling into poverty is greater for women than for men, particularly in old age, where social security systems are based on the principle of continuous remunerated employment. In some cases, women do not fulfil this requirement because of interruptions in their work, due to the unbalanced distribution of remunerated and unremunerated work. Moreover, older women also face greater obstacles to labour-market re-entry.

43 ter. In many developed countries, where the level of general education and professional training of women and men are similar and where systems of protection against discrimination are available, in some sectors the economic transformations of the past decade have strongly increased either the unemployment of women or the precarious nature of their employment. The proportion of women among the poor has consequently increased. In countries with a high level of school enrolment of girls, those who leave the educational system the earliest, without any qualification, are among the most vulnerable in the labour market.

In countries with economies in transition and in other countries undergoing fundamental political, economic and social transformations, these transformations have often led to a reduction in women's income or to women being deprived of income, whether from work or from social protection.

44. Particularly in developing countries, the productive capacity of women should be increased through access to capital, resources, credit, land, technology, information, technical assistance and training so as to raise their income and improve nutrition, education and health care and status within the household. The release of women's productive potential is pivotal to breaking the cycle of poverty so that women can share fully in the benefits of development and in the products of their own labour.

45. [Sustained economic growth and sustainable development can only be attained through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women.] The challenge is to overcome poverty and to achieve the economic and political empowerment of women.

Strategic objective A.1. Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women to overcome poverty within the framework of sustainable development

Actions to be taken

46. By Governments:

(a) Review and modify with full and equal participation of women macroeconomic and social policies with the view to achieving the objectives of the Platform for Action;

(a) bis. Analyse from a gender perspective, policies and programmes, including those related to macroeconomic stability, structural adjustment programmes, external debt problems, taxation,

investments, employment, markets and all relevant sectors of the economy, with respect to their impact on poverty, on inequality and particularly on women; assess their impact on family well-being and conditions, and adjust them, as appropriate, to promote more equitable distribution of productive assets, wealth, opportunities, income and services;

(a) ter. Pursue and implement sound and stable macroeconomic and sectoral policies, designed with the full and equal participation of women, that encourage broad-based sustained economic growth [in the context of people-centred sustainable development] [sustainable development centred on human beings], address the structural causes of poverty and are geared towards eradicating poverty and reducing gender-based inequality;

(b) Restructure and target the allocation of public expenditures to promote women's economic opportunities and equal and more equitable access to productive resources and to address the basic social, educational and health needs of women, particularly those living in poverty;

(c) Develop agricultural and fishing sectors, where and as necessary, in order to ensure, as appropriate, national and household food security and food self-sufficiency, by allocating the necessary financial, technical and human resources;

(c) bis. Develop policies and programmes to promote equitable distribution of food within the household;

(d) Provide adequate safety nets and strengthen State-based and community-based support systems, as an integral part of social policy, to enable women living in poverty to withstand adverse economic environments and preserve their livelihood, assets and revenues in times of crisis;

(e) Generate economic policies that have a positive impact on the employment and income of women workers both in the formal and informal sectors and adopt specific measures to address women's unemployment, in particular their long-term unemployment;

(f) Formulate and implement, when necessary, specific economic, social, agricultural and related policies in support of female-headed households;

(h) Develop and implement anti-poverty programmes, including employment schemes, that improve the access to food for women living in poverty, including through the use of appropriate pricing and distribution mechanisms;

(i) [Introduce measures for the empowerment of women migrants and internally displaced women through the easing of stringent and restrictive migration policies, recognition of qualifications and

skills of documented immigrants and their full integration into the labour force, and undertaking other measures necessary for the full realization of the human rights of internally displaced persons];

(i) bis. Introduce measures to integrate or reintegrate women living in poverty and socially marginalized women into productive employment and the economic mainstream and ensure full access for internally displaced women to economic opportunities, including the recognition of the qualifications and skills of immigrant and refugee women;

(j) Enable women to obtain affordable housing and access to land, including by removing all obstacles to access, with special emphasis on meeting the needs of women, especially those living in poverty and female heads of household;

(k) [In the event a modification to paragraph 38 or an earlier section indicating groups of special concern is approved, the whole paragraph will be deleted: Develop special programmes that reflect the specific needs of children, particularly girls, young women, older women and women with disabilities who are least able to gain access to social services and productive resources, as applicable;]

new (m) Formulate and implement policies and programmes that enhance the access of women agricultural and fisheries producers (including subsistence farmers and producers, especially in rural areas) to financial, technical, extension and marketing services; provide access and control of land, appropriate infrastructure and technology in order to increase women's incomes and promote household food security, especially in rural areas and, where appropriate, encourage the development of producer-owned, market-based cooperatives;

new (m) bis. Create social security systems wherever they do not exist, or review them with a view to placing individual women and men on an equal footing, at every stage of their lives;

new (m) ter. Ensure access to free or low-cost legal services, including legal literacy especially designed to reach women living in poverty;

[new (o) Develop policies and programmes for indigenous women with their full participation and respect of their cultural diversity, so that they have opportunities and possibilities of choice in the development processes in order to eradicate the poverty that affects them.]

47. By multilateral financial and development institutions, including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and regional development institutions, and through bilateral development cooperation:

(a) [[Increase resources allocated] [Allocate resources as appropriate] to the elimination of [absolute] poverty, and target women [and families] in poverty] [Support the developing countries through the allocation of new and additional resources for the eradication of poverty and target women living in poverty]];

(b) Strengthen analytical capacity in order to more systematically strengthen gender perspectives and integrate them into the design and implementation of lending programmes, including structural adjustment and economic recovery programmes;

(c) [Cancel or substantially reduce the debt burden, or convert debt services of developing countries, in particular the highly indebted low-income countries, in order to help them to finance programmes and projects targeted at development, including the advancement of women, and to achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development without falling into a new debt crisis];

(c) bis. Ensure that structural adjustment programmes are so designed as to minimize their negative effects on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and communities, while ensuring their positive effects on such groups and communities by preventing their marginalization in economic and social activities and devising measures to ensure that they gain access to and control over economic resources and economic and social activities; actions should be taken to reduce inequality and economic disparity;

(d) Review the impact of structural adjustment programmes on social development by means of gender-sensitive social impact assessments and other relevant methods, in order to develop policies to reduce their negative effects and improve their positive impact, ensuring that women do not bear a disproportionate burden of transition costs; complement adjustment lending with enhanced, targeted social development lending;

(e) [Create an enabling environment that allows women to build and maintain sustainable livelihoods.]

[47 bis. By national and international non-governmental organizations and women's groups:

(a) All parties involved in the development process, including academic institutions, non-governmental organizations and grass-roots and women's groups, should mobilize to improve the effectiveness of anti-poverty programmes directed towards the poorest and most disadvantaged groups of women, such as rural and indigenous women, female heads of households, young women and older women, refugees and migrant women and women with disabilities. However, Governments should not abrogate their responsibility for providing for social well-being by shifting social responsibility to non-governmental organizations and women;

(b) Non-governmental organizations and women's organizations should organize pressure groups and establish monitoring mechanisms and other relevant activities to ensure implementation of the recommendations on poverty outlined in the Platform for Action. These activities should aim at ensuring accountability and transparency from the State and private sectors;

(c) Women's organizations should include in their activities women with diverse needs by age, ethnicity and culture. They should recognize that youth organizations are increasingly becoming effective partners in development programmes;

(d) Women's organizations and other non-governmental organizations in cooperation with the Government and private sectors should develop a comprehensive national strategy for improving health, education and social services so that girls and women of all ages living in poverty have full access to such services. Funding should be sought to secure access to services with a gender perspective and to extend those services in order to reach the rural and remote areas that are not covered by government institutions;

(e) Women's organizations and non-governmental organizations, in cooperation with Governments, employers, other social partners and relevant parties, should develop education and training and retraining policies to ensure that women can acquire a wide range of skills to meet new demands. Policies are needed to ensure basic education, to provide vocational and technical training for girls and women of all ages and to increase access to education in science and technology, mathematics, engineering, information technology and high technology, as well as management training;

(f) Women's human right to equal access to and control of land, property and credit must be upheld, regardless of customary laws, traditions and practices related to inheritance and marriage. Non-governmental organizations and women's organizations should mobilize to protect the traditional land and property rights of all women, including pastoralists, fishery workers and nomadic groups, indigenous peoples, refugees and migrant workers.]

Strategic objective A.2. Revise laws and administrative practices to recognize women's rights to economic resources and to ensure women's access to economic resources

[Proposal to move section to F.2]

Actions to be taken

48. By Governments:

(a) Ensure access to free or low-cost legal services, including legal literacy, especially designed to reach women living in poverty;

(b) Undertake legislative and administrative reforms to give women full and equal access to economic resources, including the right to ownership of land and other property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate technologies;

new (c) [Enact laws to prevent the passing of rural and indigenous community resources into the hands of the private sector and transnational corporations;]

new (d) [Urge ratification of ILO Convention No. 169 or its effective implementation in countries where it has already been ratified, to ensure the rights of indigenous people;]

new (e) [Urge adoption by the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly of the draft International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People.]

Strategic objective A.3. Provide women with access to savings mechanisms and institutions and to credit

Actions to be taken

49. By Governments:

(a) Enhance the access of disadvantaged women, including women entrepreneurs, in rural, remote and urban areas to financial services through strengthening links between the formal banks and intermediary lending organizations, including legislative support, training for women and institutional strengthening for intermediary institutions with a view to mobilizing capital for those institutions and increasing the availability of credit;

(b) Encourage links between financial institutions and non-governmental organizations and support innovative lending practices, including those that integrate credit with women's services and training and provide credit facilities to rural women.

50. By commercial banks, specialized financial institutions and the private sector in examining their policies with a view to the following:

(a) Use credit and savings methodologies that are effective in reaching women in poverty and innovative in reducing transaction costs and redefining risk;

(b) Open special windows for lending to women, including young women who lack access to traditional sources of collateral;

(c) Simplify banking practices, for example by reducing the minimum deposit and other requirements for opening bank accounts;

(d) Ensure the participation and joint ownership, where possible, of women clients in the decision-making of institutions providing credit and financial services.

51. By multilateral and bilateral development cooperation organizations:

Support, through the provision of capital and/or resources, financial institutions that serve low-income, small and micro-scale women entrepreneurs and producers, in both the formal and informal sectors.

52. By Governments and multilateral financial institutions, as appropriate:

Support institutions that meet performance standards in reaching large numbers of low-income women and men through capitalization, refinancing and institutional development support in forms that foster self-sufficiency.

53. By international organizations:

[Increase] [Provide adequate] funding for programmes and projects designed to promote sustainable and productive entrepreneurial activities for income-generation among disadvantaged women and women living in poverty.

Strategic objective A.4. Conduct research in order to enable women to overcome poverty

Actions to be taken

54. By Governments, intergovernmental organizations, academic and research institutions and the private sector:

(a) Develop conceptual and practical methodologies for incorporating gender perspectives into all aspects of economic policy-making, including structural adjustment planning and programmes;

(b) [Seek to] apply these methodologies in conducting gender-implications analyses of all policies and programmes, including structural adjustment programmes, and disseminate the research findings;

55. By national and international statistical organizations:

(a) Collect gender and age-disaggregated data on poverty and all aspects of economic activity, and develop qualitative and quantitative statistical indicators to facilitate the assessment of economic performance from a gender perspective;

(b) Devise suitable statistical means to recognize and make visible the full extent of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy, including their contribution in the unremunerated and domestic sectors, and examine the relationship of women's unremunerated work to the incidence of and their vulnerability to poverty.